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SUBJECT: GERMAN VIEWS ON THE MAY 18 EU GAERC MEETING

REF: MAY 9 GIAUQUE E-MAIL

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JEFF RATHKE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The German MFA completely agrees on the need to tighten EU sanctions against Iran to give credibility to the double-track strategy, but says several EU members are likely to continue to block any such moves until a new (hopefully) Iranian president and government are in place later this year and have a chance to respond positively to the offer of dialogue. The MFA also confirms reports about the EU being on the verge of expanding the area of deployment of its Atalanta counterpiracy mission to deal with pirates operating further off the coast. While supportive of the planned NATO counterpiracy operation, Germany seems likely -- at least in the short run, before the September Bundestag election -- to keep all of its counterpiracy assets under Atalanta. The MFA agrees with our points on Middle East peace and believes "much will depend" on the May 18 meeting between the President and PM Netanyahu. Germany is playing down the May 21-22 EU-Russia Summit, from which it expects "no big breakthroughs." Germany agrees that there should be no unilateral withdrawals of forces from EUFOR Althea in Bosnia, and that Althea must remain as long as the Office of the High Representative is open. END SUMMARY.

DEMARCHE

¶2. (U) Post delivered reftel points on the May 18 "Jumbo" EU General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) to MFA EU Correspondent Michael Fluegger on May 13 and followed up with him on May 15 to get his reaction. Post also provided the points to and received feedback from MFA Near East Office Director Boris Ruge, MFA South Caucasus Deputy Office Director Maria Gosse, MFA OSCE Deputy Office Director Karin Goebel, MFA Bosnia Desk Officer Michael Geisler, Chancellery Georgia Desk Officer Agapi Nehring, and Chancellery Deputy Head of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union Christoph Israng.

IRAN

¶3. (C) Fluegger said that Germany was fully in line with the U.S. points and agreed that the credibility of the double-track strategy required a tightening of EU sanctions. He added, however, that several EU members -- he named Spain, Greece, Austria, Sweden -- continue to see the tightening of sanctions as incompatible with the recent offer of dialogue. They oppose any possible moves on sanctions until after Iran's presidential election in June and the subsequent formation of a new Iranian government. Fluegger noted this effectively means not taking any action until the fall (assuming Ahmadinejad loses), given the time it would take for the new president to take office and name a cabinet. (If Ahmadinejad were to win, the time line could be advanced to as early as August.) Fluegger said he thought these EU members were concerned about a slippery slope -- i.e., that additional sanctions could extend beyond Iranian firms associated with proliferation to other economic sectors or the Iranian economy as a whole. He thought the key to move

these reluctant EU members was Russia and China -- if they came in line, the EU would quickly follow.

EU ATALANTA COUNTERPIRACY MISSION

¶4. (C) Fluegger confirmed recent press reports that the EU is considering expanding the area of its Atalanta deployment to respond to the fact that pirates are operating further and further off the coast. He said that EU military authorities had already formally made the recommendation and that the Political and Security Committee (PSC) was expected to approve it on May 19. Fluegger thought that expanding the deployment area would not require a full-blown revision of the parliamentary mandate under which the Bundeswehr participates in Atalanta, but could be approved through an abbreviated process. (Comment: The counterpiracy mission is not controversial in Germany and there is expected to be little or no political opposition to the proposed widening of the deployment area. End Comment.)

¶5. (C) We pointed out to Fluegger that NATO was currently in the process of establishing its own counterpiracy mission, and we asked whether the Bundestag could consider providing a parliamentary mandate to cover the Bundeswehr's participation in that mission at the same time it is expanding the mandate for the EU mission. Fluegger said that while Germany could see value added in a NATO mission -- primarily as a way to organize and coordinate the contributions of non-EU Allies -- it wanted to avoid any "competition" between the NATO and EU operations. He said that Germany saw little point in dividing its counterpiracy assets between the EU and NATO, and preferred to keep everything under Atalanta for the time being. He also pointed out that unlike the EU, NATO does not have a hand-over agreement with Kenya, which would complicate the handling and prosecution of pirate suspects captured under the NATO operation.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

¶6. (C) MFA Near East Office Director Boris Ruge said that the MFA was "very much in agreement" with the points and noted that "much will depend" on the May 18 meeting between the President and Israeli PM Netanyahu. Fluegger took special note of our talking point on the linkage between Iran and Middle East peace, which stresses that resolution of these regional conflicts would help deal with Iran. Fluegger noted that Israel also recognized the linkage, but unhelpfully turned it around, arguing that no progress on Middle East peace was possible until the Iranian issue was resolved.

RUSSIA/GEOORGIA

¶7. (C) Fluegger praised U.S. efforts to re-set relations with Russia and noted that the only area of serious difficulty was Georgia. He regretted the apparent collapse of efforts to renew the OSCE mandate in Georgia, for which he thought the Greek OSCE Chairman-in-Office was partly to blame because of its mishandling of the negotiations. MFA Deputy Head of the South Caucasus Division Maria Gosse described the Russians as "intractable," but thought the West had conceded as much ground as it could regarding the status question. Chancellery Georgia Desk Officer Agapi Nehring argued that our joint efforts would be better spent on getting renewal of the UNOMIG mandate. Nehring also thought that a discussion of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and its extension should be kept quiet until UNOMIG is renewed, as the Russians may see an early EUMM renewal as a reason to do without UNOMIG. Both the Chancellery and MFA appeared confident that, in the end, the EU would agree to extend the EUMM. Fluegger volunteered that the MFA viewed the U.S. proposal to expand the UNOMIG mission to include a "robust" (i.e., armed) police contingent as "unrealistic" in view of objections from Russia and representatives from the two break-away regions.

¶8. (C) Fluegger played down next week's EU-Russia Summit, saying that "no big breakthroughs" were expected. Leaders

will review progress on negotiating an updated Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and sign some minor technical accords. Fluegger said that the EU would signal its willingness to discuss Medvedev's proposals on a new European security architecture and a European energy charter.

Chancellery Deputy Head of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union Christoph Israng emphasized, however, that the Alliance needs a common response to the European security architecture proposal that protects existing institutions, especially NATO and the EU. MFA Deputy Head of OSCE Division Karin Goebel stressed that Germany also sees the OSCE as the correct forum for any discussion. More generally, the Chancellery and the MFA continue to welcome U.S. efforts to improve relations with Russia, but see little direct role for Germany to play.

MOLDOVA

¶9. (C) Fluegger said he did not expect a detailed discussion, but rather just a quick review of the latest developments. He indicated that this was a Romania-driven agenda item about which it is "very emotional." Fluegger noted that the foreign ministers are expected to issue Council Conclusions on Moldova at their next GAERC meeting in June.

BOSNIA

¶10. (C) Fluegger said Germany agreed that any draw-down of forces in EUFOR Althea should be fully coordinated. There should be no unilateral withdrawals. Fluegger also agreed that the fate of Althea was directly linked to the existence of the Office of the High Representative (OHR). As long as the OHR remained open, EUFOR Althea had to stay in place. MFA Bosnia Desk Officer Michael Geisler noted, however, that with the transition from the High Rep to a EU Special Representative, the EU's military presence would have to be reconsidered, as its tasks evolve from enforcing Bonn Powers to providing advice and assistance within a non-executive mandate.

Koenig